

Families Choices: Choosing School(s)

Part 1: Literature review, interviews and
design of the questionnaire

Missy Morton & Trish McMenamin

School of Educational Studies and Human Development

University of Canterbury

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Introduction

In their examination of the impact of school choice policies on inclusive education in New Zealand, Gordon and Morton (2008) argue that there needs to be more research into “what kinds of choices are offered to disabled children and their families” (p.248) in order to find out how the policy of “choice” impacts on disabled children and their families.

The aim of the *Families choices: Choosing School(s)* project is to describe the kinds of choices parents, caregivers, and/or whānau face when their disabled child or children start school, or change school. What kinds of decisions do parents have to make? What sorts of things influence those decisions? The project targets the experiences of families whose son or daughter has had an application made for ORRS funding under the criteria of ‘learning’ or ‘language use and social communication.’ The application for ORRS did not have to be successful.

This report covers Part 1 of the project. The aim of Part 1 was to develop a questionnaire to be used in a national survey of parents. The development has been informed by a review of New Zealand and international literature looking at the decisions parents made about where their disabled children went to school. There appear to be few empirical studies of this kind. The review identified three groupings of factors that shaped parents experiences and decisions: factors related to the prevailing attitudes and philosophies in the school; factors related to the school environment and educational provision and factors that are idiosyncratic to the child (including for example that their siblings attend the same school).

These factors were explored in more depth with five New Zealand parents. The parents were interviewed to determine the applicability of questions used in other survey studies. The interviews and the literature review provided the foundation for the development of questions and response categories for a questionnaire for a Part 2 study.

This report also describes a sampling strategy for Part 2 of the project. Data from *Education Counts* provided figures for the numbers of students enrolled in schools by year group, including special schools. Data from the ORRS

scheme provided the numbers of students who applied for ORRS funding in each of the 17 GSE defined regions in New Zealand. Part 2 of the project needs to receive 1400 completed surveys to achieve a nationally representative sample that includes sufficient numbers in the smallest smallest regions. Three approaches to sending and receiving surveys are suggested.

CCS Disability Action commissioned Part 1 of the *Families Choices: Choosing School(s)*. The project was supported by a grant from the J.R McKenzie Trust.

School Choice: The New Zealand Context

In New Zealand, disabled children and young people between the ages of 5 - 19 have, like all other children and young people, the right to attend their local state-funded school; this right is enshrined in Section 8 of the 1989 Education Act which states that “people who have special education needs (whether because of disability or otherwise) have the same rights to enrol and receive education at state schools as do people who do not”. This right is further supported by Special Education 2000, the policy which was introduced in 1996 with the aim of achieving a “world class inclusive education system”. More recently educational provision for disabled people has been identified as a specific objective of the New Zealand Disability Strategy (Ministry of Health, (MOH) 2001):

Objective 3: Provide the best education for disabled people

The actions associated with this objective include:

- 3.1 - Ensure that no child is denied access to their local, regular school because of their impairment.
- 3.3 - Ensure that teachers and other educators understand the learning needs of disabled people.
- 3.4 - Ensure that disabled students, families, teachers and other educators have equitable access to the resources available to meet their needs.
- 3.6 - Improve schools' responsiveness to and accountability for the needs of disabled students. (p.16)

New Zealand also has a policy of school choice which means, in theory, that parents are entitled to select the school they wish their child to attend; parents, including parents of disabled children, have the right to approach any regular state-funded school of their choice and apply to enrol their child there. It is not, in fact, this simple. If the school the parents choose is their local state-funded school they have a guaranteed right of entry but if the school is not their local school, right of entry is not guaranteed and the right to enrolment may be less certain, particularly in the more popular schools which have enrolment schemes in place.

Theoretically all New Zealand state-funded schools should be equally able to meet the needs of New Zealand's children and young people; there is an expectation that any child in New Zealand should be able to receive as high a quality of education at one school as at any other. This means that most children are able to enjoy the quality of education they need and deserve at their local, regular state-funded school; most parents consider their local state-funded schools as the most suitable for their children and young people, and choose to enrol them there.

However for disabled children and young people it would seem this is not always the case; the parents of many disabled children and young people are seeking to enrol their children in schools other than their local, regular state-funded school despite the fact that New Zealand has had, for over ten years, an "inclusive" education policy. Attending the school in the local neighbourhood confers a number of advantages to the child and his or her family; these include being in geographical proximity to the school, attending the same school as one's siblings, being a recognized member of the local neighbourhood community and having easy access to friends from the school.

While there has been very little research conducted in New Zealand that explores parents' views about or examines the issue of choice as it pertains to disabled children there are two relevant pieces of work available; a Ministry of Education (2005) report that gives some interesting insight into parents' views and a chapter by Gordon and Morton (2008) that examines the impact of the policy of "choice" with reference to disabled children.

In 2004 the Ministry of Education (MOE) conducted what they described as a "local service profiling exercise" for special education (Ministry of Education, 2005) throughout the country; according to the MOE, 5000 parents, educators, students and others contributed to this process through local meetings and written submissions (MOE, 2005). Parents were asked what they wanted for their children and reported that they wanted them to "reach their potential; to develop as whole people – emotionally, spiritually and physically. They want their children to have friends and to feel valued for what they bring to their schools, their neighbourhoods and communities" (MOE, 2005, p.66). They wanted their children to "be happy, have a sense of

belonging, of being accepted, being valued, have choices and independence, have self-esteem, self-confidence and respect, have dignity and experience success (MOE, 2005, p.66).

In terms of the school experience parents reported that they wanted schools to be welcoming, safe and secure; to be places where their children felt included and were not marginalised or set apart and were happy (MOE, 2005). Parents wanted teachers who cared about their children, schools that fostered good relationships with them and had good communication with them. Parents emphasised the importance of learning for their children; they reported that they wanted their children to be exposed to a broad range of experiences and activities with high quality learning and education which are responsive to their children's needs. Parents also identified smaller class sizes and ease of transition from different settings or into different levels of education as areas that were important to them (MOE, 2005).

Parents were also reported as articulating a desire to "to choose the best learning environment for their children" (MOE, 2005, p.67) and wanting to "play an active part in deciding what happens to their children; they want their voice to be listened to. They want their knowledge recognised and used in the planning of their children's education" (MOE, 2005, p.67).

Clearly parents' aspirations will shape how they choose a school for their child but what the reality of "choice" means for these families is not well understood. Gordon and Morton (2008) summarised an earlier review of the *Special Education 2000* and noted:

In the major evaluation of *Special Education 2000*, parents reported a strong sense of frustration that they were unable to access schools, classrooms and resources that would allow their disabled children to receive a high quality inclusive education (Bourke et al., 1999). Despite the rhetoric of partnership, many parents felt as unwelcome as their disabled children. (p. 242)

Gordon and Morton (2008) conclude their chapter with a call to more systematic investigation of the impact of school choice policies on inclusive education. They argue that there needs to be more research into "what kinds

of choices are offered to disabled children and their families” (p.248) in order to find out how the policy of “choice” impacts on disabled children and their families. This proposed survey study is concerned with examining the factors that lead parents of disabled children to make the choice to send their children to schools other than the local regular school and whether for some parents this a real choice or if there is a choice at all. The proposed survey aims to elucidate the current situation in New Zealand.

School Choice: The International Context

In this section we review the international literature that describes parents’ experiences around school choice. Jenkinson (1997) reporting on the situation in Victoria, Australia, suggests that “Emphasis on the right of students with disabilities to attend their neighbourhood schools has been replaced by an emphasis on the provision of options and the right of parents to chose the type of school they prefer for students with disabilities” (p.190). Wooster and Parnell (2006) described the debates around school choice in the UK:

‘Choice’ is a hot topic among all the mainstream political parties with parental choice high on the political agenda. But how much choice do parents of disabled children really get, and are they able to access a school that meets their child’s needs? The Education and Inspections Bill 2006 introduces a new role of ‘choice advisors’ who will work with parents from disadvantaged backgrounds to ensure they can exercise choice. For parents, ‘choice’ is always constrained by a range of issues, but for parents of disabled children, there are many more disabling barriers to getting the right support for their child. (p.4)

The focus in this review of international literature is on empirical studies, i.e. those studies that report the views of parents based on research. We worked with the Research Librarians at the University of Canterbury Education Library to search the education databases for published reports of empirical studies. We expanded the search to look for both peer reviewed journal articles as well as non-reviewed reports. We were able to find ten empirical studies on parents’ experiences, and opted to include studies published from 1995 to the

present. The studies reported used both quantitative and qualitative approaches. We were able to find two studies that included detailed descriptions of the survey instruments used (QPPD, 2003; and Wooster & Parnell, 2006). In the following section we report on the findings of these ten studies.

Factors Influencing Parents' Choice of a School

Jenkinson (1997) suggests that “concerns of parents of students with disabilities about what makes a good school are no different from those expressed by parents in general...” (p.198). While this is a fair comment, it clouds the fact that for parents of disabled children, their ability to gain access to the “good school” they desire is much less assured than it is for parents of non-disabled children. Parents of disabled children are more likely to face barriers even when they choose to enrol their child at the local regular school despite their legal entitlement and right to do so.

Parents of disabled children, like all parents, make choices for their children on the basis of what they think will be best for them. However when choosing a school for their child it appears that parents of disabled children have to consider a range of factors that other parents do not. The factors which impact on the choices that parents of disabled children make when choosing a school relate in a much more significant way to a need to be sure that the school will be welcoming and responsive to the particular needs of their child; this concern is reflected in the extract from the Disability Strategy (MOH, 2001) which succinctly identifies the concerns that underpin the choices of many parents of disabled children and young people in relation to schooling:

3.3 - Ensure that teachers and other educators understand the learning needs of disabled people.

3.6 - Improve schools' responsiveness to and accountability for the needs of disabled students. (MOH, 2001)

A number of studies have examined the factors that parents of disabled children consider when making schooling choices for their children (Bagley, Woods & Wood, 2001; Bagley and Woods, 1998; Englebrecht, Oswald, Swart, Kitching & Eloff, 2005; Jenkinson, 1998; Lange, Ysseldyke, Lau & Lehr, 1995;

Lange & Lehr, 2001; QPPD, 2003; Wooster & Parnell, 2006; Lange, Ysseldyke & Lehr, 1997). The factors that have been identified fall essentially into three groups; factors related to the prevailing attitudes and philosophies in the school; factors related to the school environment and educational provision and factors that are idiosyncratic to the child including that their siblings attend the school.

The attitudes and philosophies espoused by the principal and teachers and by the school as a whole are important to parents of disabled children (Bagley, Woods & Wood, 2001; Bagley & Woods, 1998; Englebrecht, Oswald, Swart, Kitching & Eloff, 2005; Jenkinson, 1998; Lange & Lehr, 2000; Lange, Ysseldyke, Lau & Lehr, 1995; QPPD, 2003; Wooster & Parnell, 2006).

Parents look for schools where the principal and the teachers are welcoming and where there is unconditional acceptance of the child's worth and potential. They seek schools in which the overall philosophy and commitment of the school are inclusive and promote social inclusion and in which the SEN provision is of good quality.

Environmental factors are also important to parents of disabled children.

Parents want the school to be easily accessible, to be safe and stable and to have appropriate services, facilities and curriculum to meet the needs of their children (Bagley, Woods & Wood, 2001; Bagley & Woods, 1998; Englebrecht, Oswald, Swart, Kitching & Eloff, 2005; Jenkinson, 1998; Lange & Lehr, 2000; Lange, Ysseldyke, Lau & Lehr, 1995; QPPD, 2003; Wooster & Parnell, 2006; Ysseldyke & Lehr, 1997). The size of the school is also a factor for parents of disabled children; the research suggests that they give consideration to the number of children in the school and to class size when deciding which school to choose and report a preference for smaller class and school sizes (Jenkinson, 1997; Lange & Lehr, 2000)

Child specific characteristics are also significant for parents when choosing a school for their disabled child (Bagley, Woods & Wood, 2001; Bagley & Woods, 1998; Englebrecht, Oswald, Swart, Kitching & Eloff, 2005; Jenkinson, 1998; Lange & Lehr, 2000; Lange, Ysseldyke, Lau & Lehr, 1995; QPPD, 2003; Wooster & Parnell, 2006). The age of the child and the child's particular special needs as well as the child's happiness and the ability of the school to

care for and protect the child have been reported as factors which impact on parents' decision making. Parents are concerned to find a setting in which their child will be safe and understood, and in which his/her particular needs will be met. According to Bagley, Woods and Woods, (2001) "key words in seeking appropriate secondary schooling include safety, security, care, inclusivity, unconditional respect for individual worth and potential" (p.305). These key words could also be applied to parents seeking appropriate primary schooling.

Not surprisingly the reasons parents reported for choosing to remove their child from a particular school reflect some of the factors noted above. Parents reported staff attitudes, a lack of resources and instability of staffing as some of the reasons why they chose to look for a different school for their child (Jenkinson, 1997; Lange, Ysseldyke, Lau & Lehr, 1995; QPPD, 2003). Parents went to schools where their children's special education needs were better met, where teachers were happy to give more personal attention to the children and more information to the parents. Some researchers (Jenkinson, 1997; Lange, Ysseldyke, Lau & Lehr, 1995) examined why parents chose to move to a different type of setting, from regular to special or from special to regular, or continue with a particular type of setting. Reported factors that influenced parents' decision to move from a regular to a special setting included negative attitudes on the part of regular school staff and the school generally, large class sizes, lack of funding and suitable programmes and the appropriateness of the special school programmes; child factors included the child's particular special need, the child being socially isolated, the child's happiness and self-esteem and the child's increasing age which impacted on the appropriateness of the curriculum being offered to the child. Jenkinson (1997) reported that parents who moved their child from a special to a regular setting cited the following factors as having influenced their decision; greater opportunities for socialisation and interaction in the regular setting and a concern about the lack of academic emphasis in the special setting.

School Choice: Recent Experiences in New Zealand

We wanted to 'test out' the factors identified from the international studies as well as those suggested by the MOE (2005) *Local service national profiling report*. CCS Disability Action agreed to approach families throughout New Zealand to participate in an initial interview study. In order to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the families, CCS Disability Action was not told which of the families that volunteered were approached. The interview phase of the project was reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. The information and consent forms are in Appendix A.

Five families were interviewed to test out the

- suitability of questions used in previous studies,
- the applicability of factors identified in the review of literature
- possibilities for sequencing the structure of the questionnaire to capture the range of experiences about approaching or changing schools;

We also needed to make sure that the questions and sequencing made sense in the New Zealand context of contributing schools and policies around zoning.

The Interviews

The interviews were guided by a schedule of five topic areas:

1. Tell us a little bit about your son or daughter
 - a. Age
 - b. Number of schools attended?
 - c. Have you applied for ORRS? Get ORRS?
 - d. Any other kinds of support at school?
 - e. How does he or she get to school?
 - f. Does your child like/enjoy school now?
2. Where is your child at school now?
 - a. Year/class at school
 - b. Type of school
 - c. Local school?
3. Why this school?
 - a. What kinds of things/factors influenced you?(e.g. people, word-of-mouth, ease of access)

4. What did you have to do to enrol at this school? (What, how, who)
 - a. If applicable: Where else have they gone to school?
 - b. For previous schools: describe school and describe influences (e.g. Why did you change schools? what made you leave? What made you choose the new school?)
5. What are five important characteristics that you would look for in choosing a school? (Can list more than five, but then rank these).

Four of the interviews were digitally audiotaped and then transcribed. The transcripts were returned to the parents for further comment. None of the four parents chose to make further comment. The fifth interview was also taped, but proved impossible to transcribe. Detailed notes taken during the interview were used to report on this parent's views.

Child A is 8yrs old; he has attended two schools. He was first enrolled in the local state-funded primary school. He now attends a private specialist school in a different city. The school is 30 minutes by car from home. Child A was moved from the local state-funded primary school because his mother felt that his needs were not being appropriately met and because the "teachers can't be bothered, don't have time" to help her child.

Child B is 8yrs old; she has attended two schools. She was first enrolled in the local state-funded primary school and now attends another state-funded primary school which is 20 minutes by car from home. Child B was moved from the local state-funded primary school because the child was not learning and her needs were not being appropriately met.

Child C is 8 yrs old; he has been to two schools. He was first enrolled in the local state-funded primary school and now attends another state-funded primary school 60 minutes by car from home. Child C was moved from the local state-funded regular school because his mother felt his needs were not being met and because "it was an absolute, dismal and utter failure. Child C's sister also had to move schools.

Child D is 6 years old; she has attended only one school. She is attends a Special Needs unit at a state-funded primary school 30 minutes by car from home. Her parents chose this school particularly because of the Special Needs unit which they felt would best meet Child D's needs.

Child E is 13 years old; she attends a small city state-funded primary school. She had previously attended a local state-funded primary school in another city but there were problems. Child E was moved from the local state-funded primary school because her parents wanted her to have “a positive, inclusive experience in her primary schooling” and because they wanted both their children to be educated within the local community and be part of that community.

Why did the parents change schools?

While there were specific differences in why parents chose to move their children from the local state-funded primary school, there were three key factors that they all reported; firstly they felt that their child was not learning or making progress, secondly teachers’ lack of interest or expertise and, thirdly, general dissatisfaction with the whole experience.

Parents’ disenchantment is evident in the following comments that they made about what they experienced at the first school at which they chose to enrol their child.

“the experience was “disastrous”;

“teachers can’t be bothered or don’t have time to help”

“it was a dismal and utter failure”

“After six years of trying to work with the school so that they would become more inclusive, I sort of had this realisation that they weren’t going to change”

What did the parents want for their children from school?

What this group of parents wanted for their children reflects the findings of the literature reported above. The parents wanted their children to be happy, to learn and make progress, to be accepted and understood, to make friends and to be viewed as a child just like the others. The parents wanted their children to have access to specialist provision and to have stable schooling.

What attributes did the parents seek in a school?

Similarly the attributes this group of parents wanted to see in the schools reflect the kinds of attributes reported in the literature. They wanted their

children to attend schools with the following attributes, which they identified as key factors in an inclusive school:

An understanding and committed principal

Staff with interest and expertise in special learning needs

Teachers with high but realistic expectations

The ability to listen

Respect for and collaboration with parents

Small class sizes

Proximity to home

Good communication

Commitment to the child

Positive attitude to disabled children

Responsive to child's needs

Focus on learning

Knowledge of and commitment to special needs across the whole school

Trust between school and family

Caring, welcoming and friendly culture

Inclusive philosophy

Some implications

Gordon and Morton (2008) suggest that we need to “find out what how the policy of “choice” impacts on disabled children and their families.” (p...). This initial research suggests that for some parents of disabled children “choice” may be an illusion.

If the local state-funded school does not meet the child's needs the parents then have to find a school that they think is suitable and that will take their child. Four of these parents had this experience. This means that parents may be dependent on the goodwill of the school principal and community to accept

their child; two parents described themselves as “lucky” when the school accepted the child. In this situation it is the school rather than the parent who makes the “choice” about the child’s enrolment. Sometimes, in order to find the right school, parents may have to move house or even, as in the case of two of the parents we interviewed, move cities. The parents we interviewed also experienced additional pressures including long travelling times to or from school, having children in a number of different schools or having to move siblings to new schools. From the data from this small sample and overseas it would seem that there is a consistency of experience and views among parents of disabled children with regard to choosing schools for their children and the factors they look for in schools. The next stage of this project will survey a representative sample of New Zealand parents of disabled children to gain insight into their views and experiences.

Design of the Part 2 Questionnaire

Sampling

For the purposes of this study, we have identified the ‘target families’ as those families who have made an application to Ongoing and Reviewable Resourcing Scheme (ORRS) for their child. The two categories of type of support that we are considering are “Learning” and “Language use and social communication” (see Figure 1 below). In another project these students have been described as likely to be learning within Level 1 of the *New Zealand Curriculum* for most of their school career. The application does not need to have been successful. The assumption we are making is that families and educators would not make an application for ORRS funding if they did not believe the student required considerable support to access the curriculum.

Figure 1: ORRS Categories and Criteria

Category of type of support	Funding level	
	Very High Needs	High Needs
Learning	Criterion 1	Criterion 5
		Criterion 9 (9.1 plus 2 other)
Language use and social communication	Criterion 4	Criterion 8
		Criterion 9 (9.1 + 9.5 + 1 other)

These categories and their descriptors were retrieved from the Ministry of Education website:

[<http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/SpecialEducation/FormsAndGuidelines/ORRSApplications.aspx>].

The details of each category are as follows:

Learning (Criteria 1, 5 and 9):

1. Students need total adaptation of all curriculum content.

5. Students need significant adaptation of almost all curriculum content.

9. Students with Combined Moderate Needs.

Criterion 9 is for students with moderate-to-high learning needs in combination with two other needs at the moderate-to-high level. The three needs inter-relate to significantly reduce a student's ability to access the curriculum.

9.1 Students need significant adaptation of most curriculum content (plus **two** other criteria from this section).

Language use and social communication (Criteria 4, 8 and 9):

4. Students need specialist one-to-one intervention at least weekly, or specialist monitoring at least once a month together with daily special education support provided by others. This support must be to help with needs arising from a severe disorder of both language use and appropriate social communication

8. Students need specialist one-to-one intervention on an average of once per month, or specialist monitoring on an average of once per school term together with daily special education support provided by others. This support must be to help with needs arising from a severe disorder of both language use and appropriate social communication.

9. Students with Combined Moderate Needs.

Criterion 9 is for students with moderate-to-high learning needs in combination with two other needs at the moderate-to-high level. The three needs inter-relate to significantly reduce a student's ability to access the curriculum.

9.1 Students need significant adaptation of most curriculum content.

9.5 Students need specialist intervention and monitoring to assist with a moderate disorder of both language use and appropriate social communication (plus **one** other criteria from this section).

In 2008, there were 6998 students in schools who had received ORRS funding or who had applied and missed out. The Chief Verifier provided these figures in September 2008. Comparable figures can be found for the years 2001 to 2004 at the Education Counts website at [http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/special_education/ongoing_and_reviewable_resourcing_scheme_orrs].

Table 1 shows the distribution of students in each of the 16 Ministry of Education Special Education regions, and within each region, the students who successfully applied and those who missed out. Table 1 presents these as actual numbers of applications and as percentages of total applications. Not surprisingly the numbers of applications and outcomes vary considerably by location. These range in size from 69 (children enrolled in The Correspondence School and home schooled) to 890 (Manukau). The subgroups range in size from 9 (the number of children enrolled in The Correspondence School and home schooled who have Very High Needs ORRS funding) to 451 (the number of children in NW Auckland who have High Needs ORRS funding).

There are some interesting regional variations in percentages of funded applications. Nationally, 12.4% of ORRS applications result in funding at the Very High Needs (VHN) level. The range of applications resulting in VHN was from 8.8% (Otago) to Taranaki (21.2%). The largest category of results is those applications resulting in High Needs (HN) funding, at 50.4%. The range for the HN funding outcomes was from 47.6% (Bay of Plenty West) to 59.7% for “Unknown (TCS & Home Schooling).” Applicants were unsuccessful (U) in 37.3% of applications. Unsuccessful outcomes ranged from “Unknown (TCS & Home Schooling)” at 26.9% to 41.5% in Gisborne.

Our sampling strategy will target a nationally representative sample from each of the 16 SE regions as well as children who are home-schooled and on the role of The Correspondence School.

Table 1: Number of students applied for and/or funded by the ORRS by SE district in 2008

Number (N) and percent (%) outcomes of ORRS applications	Total applications for ORRS funding		Very High Needs		High Needs		Unsuccessful	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
SE District								
Tai Tokerau	246	3.52	31	12.6	118	48.0	97	39.4
NW Auckland	829	11.84	102	12.3	451	54.4	276	33.3
Auckland City	538	7.69	67	12.5	273	50.7	198	36.8
Manukau	890	12.72	89	10.0	442	49.7	359	40.3
Waikato	680	9.72	78	11.5	334	49.1	268	39.4
Bay of Plenty East	327	4.67	31	9.5	167	51.1	129	39.4
Bay of Plenty West	191	2.73	29	15.2	91	47.6	71	37.2
Gisborne	118	1.69	11	9.3	58	49.2	49	41.5
Taranaki	165	2.36	35	21.2	84	50.9	46	27.9
Hawkes Bay	259	3.7	40	15.4	129	49.8	90	34.7
Central	404	5.77	51	12.6	194	48.0	159	39.4
Greater Wellington	693	9.86	99	14.3	356	51.4	238	34.3
Marlborough, Nelson, Westland	290	4.14	31	10.7	143	49.3	116	40.0
Canterbury	849	12.13	111	13.1	420	49.5	318	37.5
Otago	273	3.9	24	8.8	136	49.8	113	41.4
Southland	179	2.56	28	15.6	89	49.7	62	34.6
Unknown (TCS & Home Schooling)	67	0.96	9	13.4	40	59.7	18	26.9
TOTALS	6998		866	12.4	3525	50.4	2607	37.3

Anecdotally, families are most likely to encounter difficulties enrolling their child in their local school as the child gets older. Table 2 shows the number of children enrolled in Special Schools in July 2008. The total figure of 2812 students enrolled in special schools is likely to be slightly higher than for the group of students that we are interested in. Table 2 includes residential special schools and some special day schools where students may be receiving ORRS funding, but this funding will be outside the criteria of interest for this study. Taking the total of 2812 students enrolled in all special schools as an approximate for the students of interest in this study, we estimate that up to 40% of students who have had an application for ORRS made for them are in special schools, and 60% are in 'regular' schools.

Table 3 shows the percentage of students in primary years (1 to 6), intermediate years (7 to 8) and secondary years (9 to 13+) of schooling for all of New Zealand. The higher proportion of Year 9 to 13+ students in special schools (51.42%) supports anecdotal evidence of increased likelihood to be enrolled in a special school as students move through the year levels at school. One outcome of this study will be to systematically investigate why parents might be making this 'choice'.

The most significant design feature of the questionnaire will be the large sample size. The sample size needs to be large enough to return data from the smallest cohort so that we might be able to accurately describe the *national* picture. A sample size of less than 10% means it is unlikely that we would get responses from parents who are home schooling their disabled son or daughter who also has ORRS funding under the criteria for Very High Needs (n=9 in Table 1). We have consulted with colleagues with expertise in large-scale survey design, and they have recommended a sample size of between 15% and 20% (n= 1050 to n=1400), to achieve a national representative sample.

Table 2: Students in all year groups in special and regular schools by ethnic group, July 2008

Ethnic Group	MoE YEAR LEVEL													TOTAL
<i>SPECIAL SCHOOLS</i>	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Year 13+	
European /Pākehā	51	62	76	67	66	64	127	133	115	126	110	99	290	1,386
Māori	19	29	29	32	42	40	74	68	57	70	66	59	116	701
Pasifika	18	23	23	29	21	19	23	42	30	32	32	31	75	398
Asian	14	20	16	19	13	20	24	14	15	21	13	16	42	247
Other	9	6	5	3	5	4	9	7	4	2	2	7	15	78
NZAID Scholarship & FFP Students								1					1	2
<i>Total Sp Schools</i>	111	140	149	150	147	147	257	265	221	251	223	212	539	2,812
<i>ALL SCHOOLS</i>														
European /Pākehā	31,146	31,507	32,205	33,187	32,538	33,268	38,554	34,574	34,859	35,174	36,230	31,140	24,324	428,706
Māori	13,815	13,492	13,944	13,949	13,337	13,532	15,507	13,862	14,060	13,499	12,669	8,432	5,327	165,425
Pasifika	5,929	5,904	5,837	5,897	5,690	5,627	6,507	5,573	5,513	5,494	5,410	4,368	3,573	71,322
Asian	4,901	4,329	4,712	4,971	4,737	4,920	5,802	5,036	4,933	5,174	5,293	5,214	5,561	65,583
Other	1,268	1,303	1,231	1,314	1,324	1,300	1,663	1,313	1,268	1,260	1,294	1,310	1,308	17,156
NZAID Scholarship & FFP Students	90	119	154	194	237	252	688	662	588	884	1,498	2,211	2,325	9,902
<i>TOTAL ALL SCHOOLS</i>	57,149	56,654	58,083	59,512	57,863	58,899	68,721	61,020	61,221	61,485	62,349	52,675	42,418	758,094

Table 3: The percentage of students in primary years (1 to 6), intermediate years (7 to 8) and secondary years (9 to 13+) in special and regular schools, July 2008

Year Level	Special School		'Regular' School	
	N	%	N	%
1 to 6	844	30.01	348,160	45.93
7 to 8	522	18.56	129,741	17.12
9 to 13+	1446	51.42	280,148	36.96
TOTAL	2812	99.99	758,049	100.01

Distribution strategies

We propose that surveys will be distributed in three formats. The bulk of the surveys will be in printed form and include a self-addressed envelope with 'post permit' for return. We would request key national organizations (e.g. CCS Disability Action, Idea) to nationally promote the surveys to families, asking that they keep a look out for the surveys arriving at their child's school. We would also ask these agencies to have the survey on their national websites (in PDF form) so that parents could download and print the survey to complete. This would mean that the person completing the survey in this format would have to meet the cost of posting the survey to the research team. The third format would be the opportunity to complete and submit the survey on-line. We would request community agencies to host a link from the agency website to the on-line version of the survey.

Schools in New Zealand are frequently called upon to participate in national surveys. Consequently there is often a low response rate to surveys sent to schools. Nevertheless schools will be the main source of access to parents whose children have applied for ORRS funding, successfully or not. In order to achieve a sample size of between 15 and 20% (n=1050 to 1400) of the

population of interest, it will probably be necessary to send out more than 1400 printed surveys so that even with a 30% rate of return we will have 1000+ responses to include in the analysis. Printed copies of the surveys (together with guidelines about how these might be distributed and self addressed envelopes for return) will be addressed to the SENCO in 'regular' schools and to the Principal in special schools.

As surveys are returned, we may have to go back to particular regions in order to get representation across geographical area, school type and year level.

Content

The choice of the content for the Part 2 Questionnaire is based on the review of literature at the described earlier, including two survey studies and their associated questionnaires. The first report is from Queensland Parents for People with a Disability (QPPD, 2003). The second report is Wooster and Parnell's (2006) report of a survey study by Scope in the UK. We also interviewed five parents in both the North and South Islands to test out the areas and themes covered in the questionnaires and to look for any possible gaps.

The very large target sample size (between 1050 and 1400 respondents) will result in a large amount of data to be entered. To keep both complexity and costs down for all three proposed formats, the questionnaire will need to be brief and consist of yes/no and multi-choice responses. Final formatting decisions will be based on complementarity between print (e.g SurveyPro) and electronic versions of the survey (e.g. Survey Monkey). As new versions of these tools become available, it may be possible to use one application to handle all of the formats.

The questionnaire will start with an information sheet describing the project's aims and participants' rights. It will need to state that the project has been reviewed and approved by an institutional ethics committee. Participants will be advised that returning the questionnaire is assumed to be informed consent for participating in the project.

Families' choices: Choosing school(s) for a disabled child

Questionnaire

The aim of the *Families choices: Choosing School(s)* project is to describe the kinds of choices parents, caregivers, and/or whānau face when their disabled child or children start school, or change school. What kinds of decisions do parents have to make? What sorts of things influence those decisions? How are families affected by some of the choices they have to make?

The project is being carried out by Dr Missy Morton and Trish McMenamin from the College of Education at the University of Canterbury. The project was commissioned by the National Office of CCS Disability Action. The project is partially funded by a research grant from the JR McKenzie Trust.

We are inviting you to participate in this questionnaire. The questionnaire is being distributed through schools, support and advocacy agencies and family networks. The questionnaire is being sent to parents and whānau who have made an application for ORRS funding for a student. You can complete the questionnaire even if the funding application was not successful. We are looking for responses from parents and families who have made an ORRS application under these criteria:

- 1 Learning (Very High Needs)
- 5 Learning (High Needs)
- 9.1 Learning (High Needs)
- 4 Language use and social communication (Very High Needs)
- 8 Language use and social communication (High Needs)
- 9.5 Language use and social communication combined (High Needs)

All participation in this project is voluntary. If you choose to complete the questionnaire, we have no way of identifying you, your child, or your child's school. Your responses will be anonymous.

DRAFT

We will be presenting the results of the questionnaire in both spoken and written form. The results will be reported in a way that preserves anonymity and we will treat your responses with confidentiality. The results will also be published in summary form on the CCS Disability Action website at <http://www.ccsdisabilityaction.org.nz/>

You will be able to view the results there by [insert date]. You may also request the summary or full results of the study from

CCS Disability Action Information Service

PO Box 6349, Marion Square

Wellington 6141, New Zealand

Tel: 0800 227 200

By completing and returning the questionnaire in the envelope provided, you have agreed to participate in the study.

If you have any questions about this project please contact one of us at:

Dr Missy Morton
College of Education
University of Canterbury
Private Bag 4800
Christchurch 8041
(03) 345 8312

Trish McMenamin
College of Education
University of Canterbury
Private Bag 4800
Christchurch 8041
(03) 345 8214

If you have any complaints about the project, you may contact the Deputy Chair of the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee; see contact details below.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and considering completing the questionnaire for the *Families' choices: Choosing school(s)* project.

Missy Morton and Trish McMenamin

University of Canterbury College of Education

This survey is for children for whom an ORRS application has been made. If you have more than one child for whom an ORRS application has been made, please use one survey for each child.

1. About the person completing the survey

The survey is able to be completed in three possible forms. I confirm that I have returned only one survey for my son or daughter.

What is your relationship to the student?

How many children do you have?

For how many of your children have you made an ORRS application?

Have you been successful in making the ORRS application?

If yes, what category of funding is your child entitled to?

How many ORRS funding applications have you made for your child?

What SE region are you in? (These will be listed and include 'not sure')

What, if anything, has been the impact on you or your family, in finding a suitable school for your child?

Lots of driving (e.g. because children at different schools; because not at local school have to drive to friends' houses); moving to another suburb or city; time taken to find a school; time taken to negotiate getting into the school; time taken to negotiate keeping my child in the school; emotional stress; impact on siblings (including moving siblings to new school), etc.

2. About your son or daughter

How old is your son or daughter?

Is your child with a disability the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th or later of your children?

Do you have more than one child for whom you've made an ORRS application?

How many schools has your child attended?

3. About your child's current school

DRAFT

Is this the only school that your child has gone to?

What year of school is your child now (1 to 13+)?

What type of school or classroom is your child in now?

Is this your local school?

Does your child with a disability attend the same school as your other children?

Was this your first choice of school?

How many schools did you look into or visit (including this school) before your child started at this school?

If you visited or looked into any other schools before deciding on this school, why did you decide against those schools?

Examples of responses to choose from include:

Did not support natural progression (i.e. moved from primary to intermediate school with the rest of the class); Family moved out of this area; Lack of focus on learning; Didn't seem as if they understood/could support my child's learning needs; Reputation; Staffing; proximity to home; brothers and sisters not at this school; safety; school size; class size; welcoming and/or acceptance; philosophy/attitude of school to students with disabilities; respect for and collaboration with parents; attitude of principal; specialist nature of this school, etc.

What were your main reasons for choosing the school your child is at now?

Examples of responses to choose from include:

Natural progression (i.e. moved from primary to intermediate school with the rest of the class); Family moved into this area; Focus on learning; Understood/could support my child's learning needs; Reputation; Staffing; proximity to home; brothers and sisters at this school; safety; school size; class size; welcoming and/or acceptance; philosophy/attitude of school to students with disabilities; respect for

and collaboration with parents; attitude of principal; specialist nature of this school, etc.

4a. About your child's *previous* school(s)

What was the type of school or classroom?

What years of school (or part years) did your child attend this school?

Was this your first choice of school?

How many schools did you look into or visit (including this school) before your child started at this school?

If you visited or looked into any other schools before deciding on this school, why did you decide against those schools?

What were your main reasons for choosing *this* school?

4b. About your child's *previous* school(s)

What was the type of school or classroom?

What years of school (or part years) did your child attend this school?

Was this your first choice of school?

How many schools did you look into or visit (including this school) before your child started at this school?

If you visited or looked into any other schools before deciding on this school, why did you decide against those schools?

What were your main reasons for choosing *this* school?

4c. About your child's *previous* school(s)

What was the type of school or classroom?

What years of school (or part years) did your child attend this school?

Was this your first choice of school?

How many schools did you look into or visit (including this school) before your child started at this school?

If you visited or looked into any other schools before deciding on this school, why did you decide against those schools?

DRAFT

What were your main reasons for choosing *this* school?

Thank you for taking the time to complete the questionnaire.

(Electronic version) Click here to save and finish later

Click here to send

(Print version) Please post to the project team at

Dr Missy Morton, etc

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Appendix

Information and consent forms for interviews

Families' choices: Choosing school(s) for a disabled child

Information for Participants

The aim of the *Families choices: Choosing School(s)* project is to describe the kinds of choices parents, caregivers, and/or whānau face when their disabled child or children start school, or change school. What kinds of decisions do parents have to make? What sorts of things influence those decisions?

The project is being carried out by Dr Missy Morton and Trish McMenamin from the College of Education at the University of Canterbury. The project was commissioned by the National Office of CCS Disability Action. The project is partially funded by a research grant from the JR McKenzie Trust.

We are inviting you to participate in Part 1 of the project. In this part of the project we will be interviewing up to 12 families from around New Zealand. The National Office of CCS Disability Action have sent this information form to thirty families; CCS Disability Action will not know who has opted to participate in this part of the project. As the researchers, we will not know who has been sent this information and decided not to contact us about participation. Your participation in this project is entirely up to you.

The interviews will focus on the kinds of choices you have had, and the decisions you have made, as your child has gone to school. The interview will take up to an hour, and we will arrange to do the interview in a place of your choosing.

You may stop the interview at any time or ask for something to NOT be recorded. You may also withdraw from the project at any time.

The interview will be recorded and typed up. Only the interviewer and the research assistant who does the typing up will know what you have said in the interview. The typed version of the interview will be returned for you to keep, or for comment if you wish to alter or correct anything.

All typed-up interviews will be prepared using pseudonyms for people and places (including schools and towns). This will ensure that your confidentiality, and your child's confidentiality, are protected. It is University research policy

that all interview transcripts are securely stored and then destroyed after five years.

Our analysis of the interviews will help us in developing a questionnaire that will be Part 2 of the project. We may also use excerpts from the interviews to illustrate key points in the reports of the project. The results of the project will be sent to National Office of CCS Disability Action and the JR McKenzie Trust as sponsors of the project, as well as to the Ministry of Education. We plan to prepare summaries of the project results to send to all participants. The results will also be written up for presentation at conferences and for publication in journals and magazines that are read by parents as well as professionals.

If you agree to take part in the research, please sign the consent form and return to us in the envelope provided.

If you have any questions about this project please contact one of us at:

Dr Missy Morton
College of Education
University of Canterbury
Private Bag 4800
Christchurch 8041
(03) 345 8312

Trish McMenamin
College of Education
University of Canterbury
Private Bag 4800
Christchurch 8041
(03) 345 8214

If you have any complaints about the project, you may contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Ethics Committee; see contact details below.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and considering participating in an interview for the *Families' choices: Choosing school(s)* project.

Missy Morton and Trish McMenamin
University of Canterbury College of Education

1. This project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury College of Education Ethical Clearance Committee.
2. Complaints may be addressed to:
Jenny Smith, Ethical Clearance Committee
College of Education, University of Canterbury
Private Bag 4800, CHRISTCHURCH

Telephone: 03 345 8274